



OTTERBEIN  
C O L L E G E

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**NEWS**

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GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OTTERBEIN TO STAGE WORLD PREMIERE

For the second straight year, Otterbein College Theatre will end its season with the world premiere of an original play. On May 24, Otterbein will open *Catnap Allegiance* written by noted New York playwright Kia Corthron and directed by Ed Vaughan, who directed last year's critically acclaimed *The Brothers Karamazov*. It will run May 24-28 and May 31-June 4.

Set against the background of the Gulf War and its aftermath, Corthron focuses on the emotional journey of one young black soldier, Jeddie, through his relationships with fellow soldiers and his family. Taking a page out of recent history, Jeddie and the audience are forced to explore the meaning of allegiance in these modern times.

"One bomb and hundreds could die. We dropped thousands and thousands of bombs. But in a year it will all be blurred images of an American catnap. The American dream means that no matter what America has done, it can always wake up and forget it — like it was some sleep fantasy."

That passage from the play is at the heart of *Catnap Allegiance*. It is Corthron's call for people to study how easily issues, values, causes, and events are embraced and then abandoned when the next big thing comes along. She challenges the audience to question their own loyalties to their country, themselves, their families and their beliefs.

Early in the story, Jeddie and three other soldiers are given inadequately explained medicines and sketchy instructions before being dropped into the war. The men, two white and two black, must learn to transcend their stereotypes of each other to form a bond that will carry them through the brief war.

The action then follows Jeddie as he returns home and tries to forge a new relationship with his father, who refuses to discuss his own combat experiences.

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Throughout the play, Jeddie is a young man searching for his identity — a difficult task when no one seems to show any allegiance to him. He went into the service to gain the approval of his father, a Vietnam War veteran, with the belief that he could stay out of combat by declaring himself a contentious objector. The military did not support that agreement when the Gulf War broke out and on his return his father offers only scorn for his fighting “that television war.”

With language that is sparse and poetic, Corthron's plays are hard-hitting and unrelenting. Her plays address political issues, yet they also transcend the political to capture the essence of the human struggle.

Corthron, who was featured in the October 1994 issue of *American Theatre* magazine, is known for giving a voice to the voiceless. She writes about victims — of racism, of the military, of the government — who, for whatever reason, society would like to forget. She instead puts these characters on stage to tell their stories.

Corthron currently lives in New York City and has had plays commissioned by the Manhattan Theatre Club, the Long Wharf Theatre and Second Stage Theatre. Her other works include *Cage Rhythm*, *Come Down Burning* and *Wake Up Lou Riser*.

Her plays have been produced at Long Wharf Theatre, Circle Repertory Company, American Place Theatre and Columbia University. She has also presented readings of her plays at Manhattan Theatre Club, The Philadelphia Theatre Company, Playwrights Horizons and Voice and Vision, a women's theatre project.

Corthron has won the New Professional Theatre Screenplay/Playwrighting Festival and in 1992 received the first Van Lier Playwrighting Fellowship from the Manhattan Theatre Club. She is a member of The Women's Project Playwright Lab and The Dramatists Guild.

Otterbein College Theatre will present *Catnap Allegiance* May 24-28 and May 31-June 4. in the Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St. The opening night performance on May 24 will be at 7:30 p.m. All other evening performances begin at 8 p.m. and the Sunday matinees are at 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$9.50 for Friday and Saturday shows and \$8 for Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday shows. Reserve tickets by calling the Otterbein College Theatre box office at 823-1109 between 1 and 4:30 p.m. weekdays.